



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1095, An Act Concerning School Resource Officers

Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Terri Ricks and I am resident of Hartford and a Smart Justice Leader with the ACLU of Connecticut. I am a person who has been directly impacted by violence, by racism, by sexism, by the police, by incarceration and by every kind of oppression you can imagine. I've had to fight every day of my life for a life. Today I am testifying in support of **Senate Bill 1095, An Act Concerning School Resource Officers**.

I am a graduate of Hartford Public Schools. I have faced every kind of challenge that a Black person, a Black woman, can face in their lifetime. As a graduate of Hartford Public Schools, in elementary and middle school, we didn't have tables or desks. Everything we did was on the floor. In high school, school resource officers only enhanced the problems that we faced as students. Instead of allowing young people to be in school and operate at their own pace, because a kid might come to school hungry, or wasn't able to sleep the night before because of issues they were dealing with at home, schools became places of punishment and fear, instead of learning.

That was what it became for me. I was that kid. I would come to school angry and there was no one who cared about what was going on with me. Just a cop at the door yelling at me to "Hurry up," and "Get out of the hallway." SROs made my life in school even worse. I had to tell them, "Stop pushing on me. You don't know what

I'm going through." They didn't know how to deal with conflict except to be enforcers and bullies. It didn't make any sense to me that at a place of higher learning where I wanted to be focused on my future, instead I was facing just another battle. It's pre-prepping young people to be traumatized and victimized when they're just trying to be students. How you want people to act is how you treat them.

SB 1095 would expand the definition of school resource officers to include school counselors, social workers, psychologists, aides and other staff members who are the right people to address the multitude of issues facing young people. All young people deserve to feel safe, secure and supported in their places of learning. Yet too often our schools rely on policing to keep children in line, rather than funding and allowing professionals to deliver to students the developmental and behavioral health resources they need and deserve.

I said earlier that I've had to fight every day of my life for a life. I'm also fighting to save lives, especially the lives of young people. They need us to fight for them. The Connecticut General Assembly must take steps to address the roots problems of violence through methods that do not increase policing, so I strongly urge the members of this committee to support Senate Bill 1095, and thank you for listening to my testimony today.